GENERAL MAHONE

AGAINST

CONVICT LABOUR

IN COMPETITION WITH

Honest Labour and Private Enterprise.

RICHMOND, *June 8th, 1877.*

To Gen'l WM. MAHONE, *Petersburg, Va.*

GENERAL:

The undersigned respectfully desire to know your views on the PENITENTIARY-CONVICT-LABOR-QUESTION—how its competition with honest labor may be prevented, and the effect of the remedy upon the general welfare and prosperity of the Commonwealth.

An early reply will greatly oblige,

Yours respectfully,

GEORGE PERRIN,	A. W. TYREE,
WILLIAM LYNCH,	JAMES FLEMING,
THOS. FITZPATRICK,	JAMES DILLON,
JOHN MCCAFFREY,	THOMAS FANING,
J. H. BROOKS,	WILLIAM DESNEY,
SAM'L F. MCGRHEE,	GEO. G. MATTHEWS,
A. T. MINOR,	JAMES HOWEL,
DANIEL CHALLONER,	JAMES DIAMOND,
PATRICK H. WOODS,	JOHN HOLLOWAY,
H. R. MILLER,	D. SMITH REDFORD,
W. H. GARY,	LOUIS A. BEHLE,
W. B. HOGE,	ALBERT ROSE,
WM. B. COOK,	WM. B. COOK, Jr.,
W. H. HALEY,	JOHN W. GENTRY,
C. WENDLINGER,	JOHN H. BAPTIST,

And fifty-two others.

Your earnest consideration is solicited. A full and free expression of opinion is desired.

JUL. L. WRIGHT,

June 20th, 1877. *Director-General Workingmen's League, &c.*

265.65
M27g

PETERSBURG, VA., *21st June, 1877.*

GENTLEMEN:

Free as I feel to express any opinion I have, when it would not be an intrusion, I have had and sincerely have, an aversion to any parade of myself before the public. This disposition led me, some days ago, to refuse permission for the publication of some views I had hurriedly expressed in connection with the subject on which you specifically desire to know my position.

The immediate interests you have in the matter, entitle you to a respectful consideration, and to compliance with the requests submitted. Briefly then, in response to your wish, I beg to say:

I. That some other resort should be found for the useful employment of our "Penitentiary Convicts" than in conflict with honest labour—skilled and unskilled—whether in the granite quarries or upon other fields of private enterprise. It is surely not the interest of the State to wage such an unfriendly competition against a large and essential class of her people, and in depression of her industrial developement, as comes from that use of her convicts.

The mere return in the way of hire from that manner of employment of them, falls beneath the dignity of the Commonwealth—in the face of the injury which it works to an industry and enterprise it is to her better and more permanent prosperity and her duty to encourage and foster.

II. Better—infinitely better—for all the State, that those unfortunate people should be employed upon the extension of the Canal and in the construction of *new*

works for the convenience of the people and the developement of her resources; and in the formation of an improved system of country roads.

There is no application of the surplus labour of the Penitentiary which would yield indirectly but certainly a larger *return* to the State than that to the formation of improved country roads. Nothing would so quickly inspire improvement wherever they were made, advance values, and bring to us a class of settlers most needed. Nothing would promote more earnestly the expansion of any of our cities and towns than well-improved roads leading from them; and the return from enhanced values would shortly be yielding the Commonwealth a handsome, permanent *hire* for a labour, as now employed of but little and only temporary moment.

I am, gentlemen,

Very respectfully, &c.,

WM. MAHONE.

To JUL. L. WRIGHT, Director-General, &c., Messrs. Geo. Perrin, A. W. Tyree, Jno. W. Gentry, J. H. Brooks, and others.